

House Bill 281:

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Lisa Thomas and I'm speaking in regards to House Bill 281.

In the spring of 2008 I found out from a stranger that my husband hired a Guardian ad Litem. I had never heard of a Guardian ad Litem before this, and today I wish I never had at all. After 13 years of being a stay at home mom, the life I knew would never be the same. The morning of January 22, 2007, I kissed my girls goodbye, not knowing it was the last time for 6 months. My husband filed a restraining order, telling my girls I had left them for drugs and other men. My ex told the Guardian ad Litem that I faked my hair follicle test, and even though all 6 of my UA / hair follicle tests came back negative, she chose to believe him.

The Guardian ad Litem had only been to my house twice, never moving off of the couch to look at my home or the room I decorated for my daughters. During both visits, all she did was sit there bumming cigarettes from my mother and I. Whenever either of us tried to discuss the things in regards to my ex and my daughters, she quickly changed the subject.

Even though she never took the time to observe and investigate the claims made by my ex, her recommendation to the court was that my ex got custody of the girls, the house, plumbing business, 2 vehicles, our boat, motor home, and all of our bank accounts, including our savings, retirement, and all accounts he'd already cleaned out. Three weeks later, the judge ordered me to pay child support and ruled in favor of my ex, granting him everything the Guardian ad Litem recommended. I received a suitcase of things that my ex packed and was given one day a week supervised visits with my daughters.

It has never been explained to me how a house wife of 13 years goes from a stay at home mom to an unfit parent in 24 hours... or how a person with no education in child development, spousal abuse, or chemical dependency can have the power to destroy all that is innocent and pure.

Since my divorce I've only heard from the Guardian ad Litem once, which was her threatening to further limit the supervised time I have with my children if I didn't stop smoking outside on the sidewalk in front of my

girls. It was then that I decided I would not be bullied by the Guardian ad Litem again.

The abuse and control I suffered through with my ex has continued through the Guardian ad Litem. My ex's fiancé has open access to my girls, while I, their mother, have one day a week of supervised visitation. My ex met his fiancé on the internet and moved her and her two boys in from South Carolina. The Guardian ad Litem didn't require him to answer any questions at all.

The day I gave birth to my girls I couldn't wait for all the puzzle pieces of life, but now, due to the Guardian ad Litem and my ex, my puzzle will never be complete. It might be too late for my daughters but it's not too late for the children of the future.